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## Distribution of Crime, Justice & America magazine

Posted on [February 27, 2011](#) by [admin](#)

At the end of 2001, because of unusual life circumstances, I had to look around and figure out a new career. Realizing I had significant experience in several different aspects of the private sector in the criminal justice system, I looked closely at the system for a "need"; something I could bring to the system that people desired and would want to have if available. The answer was obvious. Information! Information about the criminal justice system for educational, informational, and entertainment purposes. I knew people not only craved information about their situation, but others desired it from a fascination with the criminal justice system. So the question was...what was the best mechanism for the information and how would it be delivered? The answer was obvious, although not so simple. A magazine delivered to the people who need it the most, when they need it the most, where they need it the most. The rest would take care of itself because the editorial content would be so unique.

Before we printed our first edition of Crime, Justice & America magazine in Los Angeles in May 2002, we had to decide how many copies we would mail to the jail to be read by the inmates. I mean, what was an adequate amount to distribute? Too little and not enough inmates would have access to the copies. Too many and the jails would have a waste issue and become upset with us. Plus we wanted the inmate to keep the issue and if too many were available he would simply discard the original copy knowing more were always available. Again, most importantly, we did not want to create a waste issue.

We had called the Los Angeles jail commanders and suggested the easier distribution method which was simply dropping a stack of magazines on a table in the common areas throughout the jail, a method we commonly describe as "direct distribution". It's really very simple. **ONCE EVERY 7-10 DAYS**, a stack of magazines are placed in the common areas (mods/pods/day rooms...it's called different names in different areas of the country). The inmates can take a copy, read it, take it back to his cell, pass it around, return it....whatever he wants. Distribution is exactly the same as the daily newspapers purchased by the jail and distributed within the jail system. Well...being a new concept, understandably the Los Angeles jail commanders told us to mail the copies into the jail via USPS (United States Postal Service). So we did. We obtained a weekly list of current inmates via the issuance of a Public Records Act request, and spent hours and hours labeling individual copies to current inmates and mailing these copies via USPS. Why did it take hours and hours? Simple, because there are over 18,000 inmates inside the Los Angeles County Jail system, the largest in the nation.

After discussions with the jail administration, we agreed to start with a ratio of ONE magazine for every FOUR inmates...and see how the distribution progressed. For the first few months, we were sending over 4,000 copies to the jail's mail room **each USPS shipment**. We continually stayed in contact with the jail administration and mail room, and finally, after several months, everyone agreed to change to the "direct distribution method" of small stacks in the common areas. Let me tell you, the mail room could not stop praising the change, as well as the deputies that performed the distribution (they also managed the distribution of the mail). It was a significant change in man-hours to complete the distribution task. We will always be thankful to Los Angeles County Sheriff's department for their assistance in determining the best method of distribution. Good professional

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people there folks.

In later years, *Crime, Justice & America* magazine would often have jail facilities change their preferred distribution method to the “direct distribution.” Fresno County jail actually wrote an email praising the “direct distribution” method.

Well, as the months went by, we continued to work with the Los Angeles County Jail facilities to reduce the amount of magazines but still maintain readership, pass along readership, and retention of the magazine. Eventually, we settled upon the amount of ONE magazine for every TEN inmates, which continues to be successful to this day.

There is a common term in the magazine publishing business, “pass along readership”, that refers to the number of people who read the same single copy of a magazine. Industry standards have been discussed for decades, and the common claim is that 2.5 people read each copy of a magazine. Hmmm. Even if we use that standard, it would mean a bunch of people read *Crime, Justice & America* magazine. However, let’s get realistic here. No pun intended, it’s a captive audience. And it’s the only magazine of its kind. And it’s right on point to their needs and desire for information. And it’s FREE! Considering myself an expert regarding the magazine and its place within the criminal justice system, I feel it is safe to say MORE THAN 2.5 PEOPLE READ EACH COPY. Considering we have received countless reader letters from inmates sent from their homes after release, or sent by their family and friends, or sent from another jail facility (at times from facilities not even on our distribution list), it is obvious we reach an extraordinary amount of readers.

Currently, after NINE years, we distribute, or are authorized to distribute, into over 70 COUNTY JAILS across 13 states. Most jails choose the “direct distribution” method; however sadly, a few jails still require us to utilize USPS individual delivery to select inmates (we still only send ONE magazine for every TEN inmates...10:1 ratio) which involves that extra burden on their mail room staff. So our two distribution methods clearly offer drastic differences in personnel resources:

- Direct Distribution - leaving stacks of magazine for inmates in the common areas
- USPS delivery - Individually addressed to current inmates

After our first year of distribution into the Los Angeles County jail facilities, and expansion to surrounding counties, we tried to add a few different venues for enhanced distribution. However, no venue was anywhere near quantifiable compared to the aforementioned internal jail distribution. We tried placing the magazine into local small stores (liquor, groceries, gas, etc.) in small stacks on the counter...but without quantifiable results. We tried placing “boots on the ground” by handing out the magazine in front of the jail during various time periods...also to no quantifiable results. We tried mailing the magazine to the home addresses of the newly arrested...with similar results. We even tried specialty markets such as immigration by handing out the magazine to the long lines in front of immigration offices in Los Angeles and Orange County CA. After all this work, it was increasingly obvious that internal jail distribution was the best quantifiable method of circulation for the magazine.

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